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AUTHOR Kantner, Earl
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ABSTRACT

A study assessed the value of vocational student organizations (VSOs). Two areas of special concern were development of a sense of civic responsibility and entry employment skills. Data were obtained from 259 personal interviews with school administrators, parents, employers of former members, vocational teachers, former students, and current students. Vocational teachers from 75 schools identified as having exemplary programs also provided information. The VSOs and the personal qualities they engendered in participating members received high ratings that equated with ratings for technical skills. The three top rated qualities were getting along with others, good work habits, and effective communications. An interested, devoted teacher, high degree of participation, and a program relevant to members were the top three attributes of exemplary groups. Policies used by teachers included some class/laboratory time, time beyond the school day, meeting times available to all members, and VSOs considered as part of the curriculum and teaching process. Recommendations included VSO development as an integral part of teacher education curriculum, better preservice and inservice teacher education regarding teachers' role as advisors, and local board of education funding of instructional materials. (YLB)

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

FIVE STAR APPROACH TO EXCELLENCE

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Ohio Council on Vocational Education, 1985

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FOREWORD

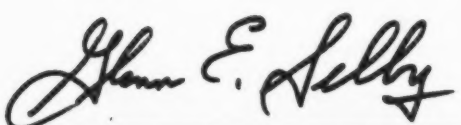
The primary purpose of this study is an assessment of the value of Vocational Student Organizations (VSO's). Two areas of special concern are the development of a sense of civic responsibility, including appropriate attitudes for entry level employment, and entry employment skills. Policies followed, activities pursued and the attributes of exemplary programs were identified. Dr. Earl Kantner, formerly Assistant State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture in Ohio and for 21 years the State FFA Executive Secretary, conducted the research.

Data were obtained from 259 personal interviews, which included school administrators, parents, employers of former members, vocational teachers, former students and current students. Another source for information was vocational teachers from 75 schools identified as having exemplary programs.

The Vocational Student Organizations and the personal qualities they engendered in participating members received high ratings which equated with the ratings for technical skills. The three top rated qualities were getting along with others, good work habits, effective communications.

Surprisingly, only 43.9% of the vocational students were members of youth organizations. An interested, devoted teacher, high degree of participation, and a program relevant to the members were the top three attributes of exemplary groups. Policies used by the teachers included some class/laboratory time, time beyond the school day, meeting times available to all members, and VSO's considered as part of the curriculum and teaching process.

Among the recommendations, it was proposed that VSO's be developed as an integral part of teacher education curriculum, that teachers be better prepared in their pre-service and in-service education for their role as advisors, and that instructional materials be funded by local Boards of Education.



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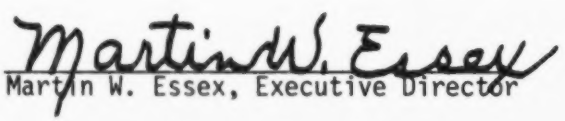

Martin W. Essex, Executive Director

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PERSPECTIVE

A basic purpose of vocational education is to prepare high school students for entry level jobs and to assist them to be successful in those positions. In concert with business and industry, quality courses of study have been developed with special emphasis on skill development necessary for job execution. Little such attention, however, has been given to the development of vocational student organizations, the vehicles generally credited with the development of those personal qualities that are essential to job success.

The study is in two parts. Part I deals with opinions regarding the value of vocational student organizations and selected personal traits they tend to develop, and Part II deals with the policies, the activities and the attributes that teachers of exemplary local VSO's consider important in the development of quality VSO's.

Specific Purposes

Part I -- To secure the opinions of selected citizens about:

(a) The importance of VSO's as part of the career-preparation program of Vocational Education.

(b) The comparative values of personal and technical skills.

(c) The relative values of nine selected personal skill areas in terms of job competency.

Part II - To identify procedures used by teachers of quality local VSO's for dissemination to others for program improvement.

(a) To determine the activities used.

(b) To determine the policies used.

(c) To identify the attributes of exemplary local VSO's.

Design of the Study

Part I. Securing Citizen Opinions About VSO's

A. Fifteen schools were selected to participate in the study. Selection was divided equally among city systems, area vocational schools and local systems, with distribution throughout the state.

B. Superintendents of the 15 schools were sent a written description of the study, along with an invitation to participate. Thirteen accepted, and their school and constituents became a part of the study.

C. Six groups were identified for personal interview as being relevant to the purposes of the study, including school administrators, parents of current or former VSO members, employers of former VSO members, current students now preparing for employment, vocational teachers and former students, now employed.

D. An information sheet was developed, including nine personal skills previously identified in a research study[1] at The Ohio State University along with information relating to the development of technical skills and a method of indicating the overall value of VSO's.

E. A 1-10 point scale (1=lowest, 10=highest) was selected for respondents to indicate their value judgments.

F. Two hundred fifty nine (259) personal interviews were conducted in thirteen (13) participating school districts.

Part II. Identification of Procedures Used by Teachers of Quality Local VSO's

A. Fifteen exemplary local VSO's were selected by the state student organization leaders in each of the five vocational services, for a total of 75 schools.

B. A data sheet was developed to secure the desired information.

C. Teacher-advisors of the 75 selected local VSO's were sent the questionnaire, and invited to share their successful procedures with others. Contributions from the sixty-eight respondents were incorporated into the study.

[1] Michael N. Hampson, L.H. Newcomb and J. David McCracken, Essential Leadership and Personal Development Competencies Needed in Agricultural Occupations as Identified by Agricultural Leaders in Ohio; Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University, 1977.

THE NATURE OF VOCATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Vocational Student Organizations as they are known today actually have roots dating back to February 23, 1917, when the Smith-Hughes Act was passed by the Congress of the United States providing for vocational education in the public schools. The early curriculum consisted largely of classroom study, but a need was soon discerned for social leadership and competitive activities. Momentum grew culminating with the development of the Future Farmers of America (FFA), the first Vocational Student Organization, in 1928. Future Homemakers of America (FHA) was founded in 1945, followed by Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) which was organized in 1947. The two newest VSO's, Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA) and Office Education Association (OEA), were founded in 1965 and 1966 respectively.

Vocational Student Organizations today are a valuable part of the school curriculum in that they provide an ideal opportunity for students to develop their personal skills -- ability to work with others, cooperation, good work habits, effective communication, good citizenship and other qualities that are important to job success. VSO's are also a valuable part of the vocational education program in that they enhance instructional procedures. The interest and enthusiasm generated through VSO's permeate the entire program with most members becoming more motivated to learn and more likely therefore to reach their potential. Also, many activities are an out-growth of classroom instruction and thus are a direct extension of the teaching-learning process.

Each of the five service areas of the Ohio Division of Vocational Education has an active Vocational Student Organization. Membership has grown over the years. Current membership figures are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

RELATIONSHIP OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE ENROLLMENT WITH VOCATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE AREA	VSO	STUDENT ENROLLMENT	VSO MEMBERSHIP	PERCENT MEMBERSHIP
Marketing Education	DECA	8,495	7,122	83.8
Agricultural Education	FFA	18,672	17,883	95.7
Home Economics Education	FHA/HERO	80,608	13,275	16.5
Business Education	OOEA	22,831	14,365	62.9
Trade & Industrial Ed.	VICA	53,108	28,086	52.8
TOTALS		183,714	80,731	43.9

It is not the intent of this study to research, identify and analyze the reasons that some students are not involved in their particular Vocational Student Organization. It seems appropriate to mention, however, that VSO membership is not a firm program requirement. Many students thus do not participate, just as they would not participate in other parts of the program, i.e., classroom study, if it were not required. The payment of dues, normally between $1.00 and $5.00 per year, is sometimes mentioned as a hardship for some students.

Description of Vocational Student Organizations

Each of the Vocational Student Organizations has specifically stated purposes. Their role as a part of their respective Vocational Service area may be generalized, however, as supplementing and enriching the instructional program, developing the personal skills of members, and adding motivation, enthusiasm, and pride to the entire vocational program.

Vocational Student Organizations play a major role in "the development of the person" as a vital part of vocational education's task of preparing students for the world of work. Following is more specific information about each VSO.

DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) is the student organization of the Marketing Education Service. DECA's mission is to help teachers create learning opportunities for students preparing for careers in the marketing industry. The focus of DECA activity is on developing a greater understanding of, and appreciation for, marketing, merchandising, and distribution, while at the same time increasing civic consciousness, building social intelligence and enhancing leadership development. Major activities include competency based competitive events, conferences/seminars, and leadership development activities. DECA members are encouraged to be both leaders and followers in their preparation for responsible citizenship. DECA is an interrelated school centered organization with 250,000 members nationally and more than 7,000 in Ohio. National Headquarters are in Reston, Virginia.

FFA (Future Farmers of America) is organized as an integral part of the curriculum of Vocational Agriculture, with emphasis on the development of leadership, citizenship and cooperation. Established originally as a farm-boy organization, FFA has evolved into an agricultural student organization related to the entire agricultural industry. Male and female members are included on an equal basis. Major emphases include chapter meetings, strong committee work, competitive judging/skill events and a vigorous incentive awards

program. The FFA program is community-oriented and as such enjoys great personal and financial support. The Ohio FFA Foundation has a $130,000 budget supported by 1,200 individuals, companies and businesses. FFA has a half-million members nationally and 18,000 members in 365 Ohio High Schools. National Headquarters are in Alexandria, Virginia.

FHA/HERO (Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations). Home Economics students enrolled in, or who have previously taken courses in, the consumer homemaking or the job training program have opportunities for membership in the FHA/HERO State and National organization. State sponsored activities include various leadership conferences, workshops, camps and meetings plus regional and state skill event participation. Program goals are to develop youth leadership capabilities through decision making and goal setting processes and to help youth assume their roles in society through the development of personal growth, family life, vocational preparation and community involvement. FHA/HERO, founded in 1945, has a national membership of 400,000 young women and men in 12,500 chapters. There are 53 state associations including the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Ohio, eighth in the nation in membership, has over 13,000 members with 632 chapters.

OEA (Office Education Association), the student organization of business and office education programs, is the youngest of the vocational student organizations. Chartered in 1966, it has a national membership of nearly 63,000 and an Ohio membership of nearly 14,500. OEA members are particularly interested in preparing for careers in businesses and offices. OEA is established as a co-curricular organization as an integral part of the education program designed to develop leadership abilities, interest in the American business system and competency in office occupations. OEA embraces nine missions including development of social awareness, leadership, motivation, professional growth, a spirit of competition, and others. Both the National and State Headquarters are located in Columbus, Ohio.

VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America), the student organization of Trade, Industrial and Health Education, currently has 28,000 members in Ohio. One of its major activities is a Skill Olympics, which brings together industry and labor representatives, educators and students to conduct hands-on contests. Twenty-eight skill contests and eight leadership contests are administered with a high degree of competition. Other VICA activities include an achievement program, leadership opportunities and personal development activities. VICA stresses a two-part program - assistance in occupational training as well as developing leadership and communications skills. VICA has National Headquarters in Leesburg, Virginia.

Support of VSO's By State and National Educational Agencies

Vocational Student Organizations have been endorsed and encouraged by the Ohio Board of Education. A resolution[2] enacted March 13, 1972 states in part:

> Whereas these aspects of human development combine with the individualized skill attainment available in vocational education, [and] provide youth with the essential preparation for entry into their chosen vocation, . . . Vocational Youth Organizations shall be encouraged as an integral part of vocational education instructional programs in public schools for the purpose of complementing and enriching instruction.

While these and other statements contained in the Resolution give strong support to VSO's, it is important to note the use of the word "encourage" rather than the usage of more firm and directive terminology.

The United States Department of Education has identified Vocational Student Organizations as an integral part of the total program of vocational education. A 1981 Policy Statement[3] states in part:

> The United States Department of Education recognizes the educational programs and philosophies embraced by the following Vocational Student Organizations as being an integral part of vocational education instructional programs. . . .

Nine organizations were named, including the five VSO's in operation in Ohio. The policy statement continues in a supportive nature, including this statement:

> The United States Department of Education approves of Federal and State grant funds for vocational education to be used by the States to give leadership and support to these Vocational Student Organizations and activities directly related to established vocational education instructional programs at all levels under provisions of approved State plans for vocational education.

These statements of policy appear to be a directive to the states to include Vocational Student Organizations as an integral part of the vocational education program. It is the responsibility of the states to develop the VSO's according to the policy statement.

[2]Ohio Board of Education Policy Statement; Resolution Endorsing and Encouraging Youth Organizations in Vocational Education. March 13, 1972. (See Appendix 1.)

[3]U.S. Department of Education, Policy Statement; Policy of The United States Department of Education for Vocational Student Organizations. T.H. Bell, Secretary of Education and Robert M. Worthington, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education; September, 1981. (See Appendix 2.)

PART I —VALUE OF VOCATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS, RATING OF PERSONAL TRAITS AND RELATIVE VALUES OF PERSONAL AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

Value of Vocational Student Organizations as Indicated by Respondents

Analysis of the 259 personal interviews reveals a high regard for Vocational Youth Organizations! The cumulative rating for VSO's was 8.96 on the 1-10 point scale, (10 being highest), obviously a creditable rating in terms of value for job preparation.

As shown in Table 2, all groups rated VSO's relatively high. Although the groups are comparatively close, it might be noted that parents were most favorable in their judgment of the value of VSO's. Perhaps parents are in the best position to observe changes in their sons' and daughters' goals, attitudes, behavior and motivation -- traits that are so often improved in Vocational Student Organizations.

TABLE 2
Value Ratings of Vocational Student Organizations
by Respondent Group Shown in Numerical Rank Order

GROUP	MEAN RATING
Parents	9.31
Students	9.22
Former Members	9.05
School Administrators	8.92
Employers	8.79
Vocational Teachers	8.58
Composite	8.96

Personal interviews uncovered literally "hordes" of values that result from active participation in Vocational Student Organizations. Commonly mentioned skills were "Learning to work together", "Learning to communicate", "Development of responsibility", "Development of dependability", and "Improving self-image". Other values mentioned include "Inspires better academic work", "Adds to technical preparation", "Develops pride", "Keeps the members occupied -- out of trouble", "Develops leadership" and "Helps their personality".

Values of Personal Skills as Indicated by Respondents

While the mean rating of the nine personal skills was relatively high, as may be seen in Table 3, the ratings ranged from a high of 9.45 to a low of 7.78.

TABLE 3

Personal Skills Developed in Vocational Student Organizations
Ranked According to Mean Rating

PLACING	SKILL	MEAN RATING
1.	Ability to carry out personal skills in working with others	9.45
2.	Possession of exemplary work habits	9.12
3.	Possession of effective communications skills	9.08
4.	Possession of desirable citizenship traits	8.81
5.	Possession of acceptable social abilities	8.62
6.	Ability to lead individuals and groups	8.35
7.	Ability to participate in committees and groups	8.22
8.	Skill management of financial matters	8.22
9.	Ability to participate in professional business and civic organizations	7.78
Composite		8.79

In Table 3, it may be noted that the nine personal skills fall into two groupings with the top five skills relating directly to success on the job while the remaining four lower rated skills pertain more to aspects that are only indirectly related to employment.

It is interesting to note, in Table 4, that the overall ratings of the six respondent groups are rather high, with the Parent group ranking highest. The range among the groups, however, is not wide.

TABLE 4

Value of Personal Skills
Shown by Respondent Group

GROUP	MEAN RATING
Parents	8.95
Former Members	8.80
Students	8.79
Teachers	8.49
Administrators	8.41
Employers	8.36
Composite	8.79

Comparative Ratings of Personal and Technical Skills by Respondents

The reaction of the respondents indicated the value of personal skills in society and on the job and the importance of developing the "person". It is also important for people seeking employment to possess appropriate technical skills. Table 5 shows how the six respondent groups noted the value of technical skills in terms of job success.

TABLE 5
Ratings of the Value of Technical Skill Development
Shown by Respondent Group

GROUP	MEAN RATING
Students	9.33
Former Students	9.05
Parents	9.00
Employers	8.67
Teachers	8.43
Administrators	7.36
Composite	8.78

It is notable that current and former students gave the most favorable ratings to the value of technical skill development in terms of job success.

A comparison of the composite ratings of the value of personal skills (8.79) and of technical skills (8.78) indicates that the 259 respondents saw a close relationship in the values of the two types of skills in the world of work.

The interviews confirmed these value ratings with nearly every respondent group. The following two quotations are representative of the response reviewed. A superintendent of one school stressed the importance of personal trait development:

> I feel VSO's and their activities are just as important as the skill training our students receive.

A teacher remarked:

> Our Local Advisory Committee feels that personal skills are as important, and in some cases more important, than manipulative skills.

School Administrators Consider VSO's Valuable

Administrators generally gave VSO's a favorable rating of 8.92 in a 10-point scale which was only slightly below the composite rating of 8.96 for the six responding groups. Discussions with administrators revealed a feeling that to be most valuable VSO's should be a part of the curriculum as indicated by these typical statements: "Youth Organizations should be so intrinsically associated with the day-to-day operation of vocational programs that students hardly notice the difference. . . . I feel VSO's and their activities are just as important as the skill training our students receive.

The interrelationship of personal qualities and technical skill development appears to form a type of inseparable alliance indicating that each should be treated with equal favor in the curriculum of vocational education.

Ratings of Personal Skills

School administrators gave a rating of 8.41 to the personal performance skills stressed by VSO's. Their top three personal skills were good work habits, good communications skills, and developing the ability to carry out personal skills (honesty, integrity and ability to get along with people.) The important human traits of enthusiasm, leadership and motivation were recognized in personal interview with the administrators. The following statements indicate the tenor of the group:

> I have noticed a change in individuals who are dressing better, keeping neater and cleaner appearances, and developing a better personality . . . . VSO's develop confidence and self-esteem -- very important personal qualities.

Comparative Ratings of Personal and Technical Skills

An important finding -- school administrators involved in the study believe the "development of the person", with a rating of 8.41, is more important than the development of technical skills which received a lower rating of 7.36. This is the widest range in rating values of any of the respondent groups. The administrators were quick to give credit to teachers for conducting quality student organizations. This statement is typical of many:

> I believe the youth organization is as essential as the program itself. With the proper advisor, and through active student organization work, job related qualities are developed, such as social habits, citizenship, good work habits and group participation.

Parents Pleased with VSO's

Of the six responding groups parents gave the value of VSO's the highest rating of 9.31 on a 10-point scale. Good attitudes, motivation, enthusiasm, and pride were some of the strengths parents noted in personal conversation, as illustrated by these remarks:

> It changed my daughter. . . . It is a deterrent to the minuses -- drugs, alcohol, negative attitudes, apathy, etc. . . . I am really pleased with what our son is getting out of his Vocational Student Organization. . . . My son blossomed out in his VSO. I knew he had the native ability, but the student organization was the thing that interested and developed him.

There is no doubt that parents notice a definite change in attitude, interests, and motivation when their sons and daughters join Vocational Student Organizations and become involved in their many up-tempo activities.

Ratings of Personal Skills

The parent group gave all personal skills developed in Vocational Student Organizations high marks with an overall average of 8.95 on the 10-point scale. They judged the development of personal skills including honesty, integrity, and getting along with others to be primary. This was followed by the development of good work habits and effective communications skills. They rated the ability to lead groups, lowest.

Comparative Ratings of Personal and Technical Skills

It is noteworthy that the parent group gave the development of technical skill preparation in vocational education a 9.00 rating in comparison with 8.95 for personal skills. This appears to indicate a concept by parents that personal and technical skills are about equal in value in preparation for entry into, and success on the job. Their many comments in the interviews supported this. One parent's remarks seemed to sum up the feeling of all:

> Classroom study develops the technical skill, and student organizations develop kids . . . both are important . . . they go hand in hand.

Employers Say "Yes" to Vocational Student Organizations

Employers gave VSO's an overall rating of 8.79 on the 10-point scale. In the personal interviews, employers were strong in their belief of Vocational Student Organizations. One major employer stated:

> My employees that have had active experience in Vocational Student Organizations do better at their job and show more leadership than students not in these programs. I think these organizations are great. . . . they really help the businessperson.

Ratings of Personal Skills

The ratings by employers of the 9 personal performance skills showed a rather broad range. They rated the possession of exemplary work habits highest, as one might expect from that group. They also thought that desirable citizenship traits and effective communications skills were highly significant and rated them second and third respectively. The ability to participate in professional, business and civic organizations, and the ability to participate in committees and groups were rated lowest, along with the ability to lead individuals and groups.

Comparative Ratings of Personal and Technical Skills

The opinions of those who hire the products of vocational education would seem to be especially valid in terms of qualities and competencies potential employees should possess. Thus their judgment of the comparative value of personal skills and technical skills appears to be especially significant as indicated by their 8.67 rating for technical skill development and the 8.36 rating for personal skill development.

This is an important finding -- employers in effect have said that, while the development of technical skill is rated slightly higher, personal skills are nearly as important as technical skills in terms of job competency.

One of the strongest statements in support for personal skills and VSO's came from a large employer in a major city who said:

> We have been an employer of vocational students for approximately 12 years. At this point we would not hire any student who has not had the benefit of active participation in a Vocational Student Organization.

Former Members (Employees) Rate VSO's High

Former members gave Vocational Student Organizations high marks with a value of 9.05. This is in the top one third of the ratings by the six respondent groups. There were many and varied credits given to VSO's, but the mainstream of appreciation related to traits directly relevant to job success. This statement by one employee was typical of many others:

> Vocational Student Organizations are very important. Mine assisted me in developing good communications skills that help me every day at work. My VSO helped prepare me to go into the workforce and succeed.

Ratings of Personal Skills

Former members rated exemplary work habits as being most important, followed by ability to carry out personal skills in working with others (honesty, integrity, cooperation) and possession of effective communications skills. They rated the ability to participate in professional, business and civic organizations lowest. Also rated low was the ability to participate in committees and groups, and the ability to lead individuals and groups.

Comparative Ratings of Personal and Technical Skills

In comparing the value of personal skill development with technical skill development, this group indicated that while personal skills were important they did not rate them as high as technical skills. Their average rating was 8.80 and 9.05 for personal skills and technical skills respectively.

In personal interview, the former members recognized the value of student organizations in developing technical skills in addition to personal skills. This statement by one young lady was typical:

> My student organization helped improve my technical job skills through local, state and national competition.

Many students take an active part in competitive activities where they not only improve their motivation and competitive nature, but also sharpen their technical skills to a keen edge.

Students Like VSO's

In rating the overall value of Vocational Student Organizations, the student group ratings averaged 9.22 on the 10-point scale which was in the top one third of the ratings. This indicates a high level of satisfaction by students for the experience provided by VSO's in preparing for careers. Typical of the opinions of the students was this statement by a young lady who appeared to be quite serious about her future:

> I feel my vocational program has prepared me greatly for my career. My abilities have grown and expanded since I became active in my student organization.

Another said:

> I have done a lot of things like public speaking and working with my chapter members that will help me with a job. I like it.

Ratings of Personal Skills

In analyzing the student ratings of the personal skills, it is important to note that topping the list was the ability to carry out personal skills in working with others (honesty, integrity, cooperation), followed by the possession of effective communications, and the possession of exemplary work habits. Ranking lowest were those skills relating to financial skills, ability to participate in committees and groups, and the ability to participate in professional and business organizations.

Comparative Values of Personal and Technical Skills

The students felt that as valuable as personal skills are to job success, technical skill development is even more valuable. While they rated personal skills development at 8.79, they rated technical skill development a very high 9.33. Perhaps this indicates an understandable concern for "being able to do the job" on the part of young people.

In review of the comments made by the students, it seems especially significant that they overwhelmingly expressed appreciation for job preparation. One might expect this particular age group to enjoy their youth groups, to have fun and fellowship, and indeed they do, but they actually seemed to value the development of job qualities even higher.

Teachers Say VSO's Are Valuable in Student Development

In making an overall judgment of the value of VSO's, the teachers' ratings averaged 8.58 on the 10-point scale...the lowest average rating of the six respondent groups. It is important to point out, however, that the teachers also graded at a lower level in other parts of the study. Although their 8.58 is lowest of the six groups, it still is a relatively high average rating for a 10-point scale.

Ratings of Personal Skills

Teachers gave an average rating of 8.49 to the development of personal skills which is in the lower one fourth of the six rating groups. It is interesting to compare their scores for the other areas, such as their 8.58 and 8.43 value ratings for VSO's and for the development of technical skill respectively.

The teachers judged the ability to carry out personal skills in working with others (honesty, integrity, cooperation) as being of greatest importance. They also gave high marks to the development of effective communications skills and the possession of good citizenship. They were the least supportive of the development of skill in financial matters. They also rated the ability to participate in professional, business and civic organizations rather low, as well as the ability to lead individuals and groups.

Comparative Ratings of Personal and Technical Skills

The teachers' comparisons of the value of personal skill development with that of technical skill development were very close -- 8.49 value for personal skills and 8.43 for technical skills. This finding has implications for curriculum development.

The teachers identified a wide variety of other values of VSO's. Direct quotations provide positive references to the development of pride, self-confidence, social development and the improvement of moral standards. This statement by a teacher seems to summarize the opinions of many:

> I feel that vocational student organizations help bring out qualities in students that might otherwise be dormant. Students get more involved and are able to see that they are important, and actually reach their potential.

PART II—ACTIVITIES, POLICIES, AND ATTRIBUTES OF EXEMPLARY VOCATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Inspiration for this part of the study came in part from the 1984 National Bestselling book "In Search of Excellence"[4]. The basic process used in this reference seems relevant for this research -- study the successful, and urge others to share their procedures! This approach was indeed utilized, and the resultant findings follow.

Activities Used by Teachers of Exemplary Vocational Student Organizations to Develop Desirable Personal Skills

The identification and treatment of personal qualities developed by members through active participation in Vocational Student Organizations was accomplished in a 1977 study conducted by the Department of Agricultural Education at The Ohio State University. However, the actual ways and means of developing those personal skills have been given little attention and that has become the major thrust of this study. In attempting to identify these ways and means the VSO activities used by the 68 responding teachers in developing the desired personal skills were identified. The results are recorded in Table 6.

Observation of Table 6 reveals the extent to which the major VSO activities are used by teachers to develop each of the specific skills. While there is a fairly broad use of the activities, it is somewhat surprising to the writer that there is not a higher percent of usage in many of the cases. For example, if 47% of the teachers use chapter meetings to develop exemplary work habits, would not this be good for the other 53%? Another example relates to public speaking which is used by only 74% of the teachers to develop effective communication skills. It would seem logical to assume all teachers would utilize public speaking instruction, practice and competition to develop effective communication skills.

[4]In Search of Excellence. Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., Warren Books, March, 1984.

TABLE 6

PERCENT OF TEACHERS USING THE VARIOUS VSO ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP PERSONAL SKILLS

(Personal skills ranked according to importance as indicated by citizens included in Part I of this study.)

RANK ORDER	PERSONAL SKILLS	VSO ACTIVITIES: CHAPTER MEETINGS	COMMITTEES	HOLDING AN OFFICE	LEADERSHIP CONFERENCES CONVENTIONS	CAMPS	PUBLIC SPEAKING	COMPETITION EVENTS	CHAPTER-CLUB FINANCING	EARNING AWARDS	PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE	COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES
1	Ability to work with others	86	92	68	68	57	31	68	54	38	58	83
2	Possession of exemplary work habits	47	67	61	39	21	18	72	36	51	26	46
3	Possession of effective communications skills	85	68	82	72	46	74	72	24	39	54	56
4	Possession of desirable citizenship traits	69	60	65	75	53	35	44	24	43	43	83
5	Possession of acceptable social abilities	78	58	46	85	58	39	50	19	35	36	78
6	Ability to lead individuals and groups	88	82	89	85	57	54	72	47	53	68	69
7	Participation in committees and groups	72	94	67	67	51	26	60	44	29	57	69
8	Skill in Management of Financial Matters	41	47	66	20	8	1	14	97	2	1	34
9	Participation in professional and civic organizations	69	57	75	79	36	53	39	33	31	44	78

Due to limited attention to educational procedures in Vocational Student Organizations by educators, it is highly possible that program content of VSO's is not based on educationally-sound criteria, but rather, on teacher interest and ability, student interest, level of difficulty, amount of time and effort required and others. If this were indeed true, the development of personal skills would be in a truly spineless position -- loosely resulting from a series of enjoyable activities rather than having a position of educational credence that would be pedagogically sound. The high value put on the development of personal skills by employers, employees, parents and others would seem to dictate immediate and serious attention to this concern!

A detailed review of Table 6 does reveal more utilization of some activities than others. Those that have more teacher usage include chapter meetings, committee work, holding an office, leadership development, and community service activities. Several other activities such as camps, earning awards and chapter financing seem to be utilized less, possibly because of their specialized nature, thus involving less members. Also, some of the state vocational services do not include all activities in their statewide programs.

The 68 teachers of the exemplary VSO's were asked, from an active teacher's perspective, to share their views about VSO activities. As may be expected, their comments were quite varied. One said:

> Many experiences are needed to build the complete person, including leadership traits, social skills, ability to participate, and the will to compete. VSO's provide the opportunities to develop these qualities.

Numerous statements that teachers made relate to the value of VSO's as a useful tool in classroom instruction. Typical of such statements is this quotation from a teacher in a small rural school:

> Vocational Student Organizations give every student a chance to succeed. Not every student can be outstanding in everything, but they all can contribute to a successful organization, and profit from the worthwhile feeling that results. We are in the business of developing successful citizens, and our student organizations help us do that.

Teachers who, for whatever reasons, do not devote the necessary time and effort to the development of quality student organizations are chastised a bit by this statement from a dedicated teacher/advisor who remarked:

> If students are not active in their vocational student organizations, teachers are negligent in their duties!

Policies Used in the Development of Quality VSO's

Quality VSO's do not just happen! To achieve excellence, a considerable amount of framework upon which to build programs is required. Once the proper framework is in place the development of quality in student organizations becomes possible and indeed may occur.

Seventy-five exemplary teacher/advisors of fifteen active VSO's in each of the five vocational services were identified and were asked to share the framework -- the major policies that they used to facilitate quality VSO's. Sixty-eight teachers responded, and the results are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7

Policies that Teacher/Advisors of Active VSO's Utilize, Shown in Rank Order According to Percent of Teacher Use

POLICY	PERCENT OF TEACHERS
Some class/lab time is used for VSO activities	93
Teacher time beyond school day is used	92
Meeting times are available to all members	90
VSO's are important in the teaching process	89
VSO's are considered a part of the curriculum	86
Teacher serves as advisor with no additional pay	86
All (100%) of students are involved in the VSO	78
The grading system includes the VSO	47
VSO instructional materials are Board funded	24

One of the findings that may be drawn from Table 7 is that the exemplary VSO's are an integral part of the vocational education curriculum. This summation is supported by the fact that class/lab time is used for some VSO activities by 93% of the teachers responding to this item, the highest teacher usage item of the nine procedures surveyed. This factor alone indicates VSO's are involved as an integral part of the vocational education curriculum. Further support for this finding is found in the fact that 89% of the teachers consider VSO's an important part of the teaching process, and additionally, 86% of the teachers actually do consider VSO's a part of their curriculum. One teacher said, in the support of the intra-curricular nature of VSO's,

> Our particular Vocational Student Organization is an important part of our curriculum. It gives the students a chance to apply what they have learned in class.

A remark by another teacher, indicative of numerous similar statements, is quoted as follows:

> Vocational Student Organizations must continue to be an important part of the curriculum. We think the personal skills developed in VSO's are as important as technical skills in terms of job success.

It is significant that 92 percent of the responding teachers with active VSO's spend varying amounts of their own time beyond the school day to carry out the activities of their VSO's. While many teachers consider this to be "part of the job", some teachers are unwilling to spend additional time with students which makes the development of a quality VSO very difficult if not impossible. Most successful teachers feel the time and effort required for VSO activities is well spent. Said one teacher:

> Indeed youth activities require extra time, energy and enthusiasm from the teacher, but the involvement in these activities is a great motivating factor for students; thus the additional effort is worthwhile.

One final observation may be made from the policies recorded in Table 7. A majority of teachers are not giving grade-credit for VSO activity, nor are Boards of Education providing Instructional Materials to any degree. This seems somewhat paradoxical. Generally VSO's are considered to be an integral part of the curriculum with class time used for VSO activities. In addition, vocational education programs are expected to include VSO's, the community expects quality VSO's, most teachers expend a great deal of time and effort on them, and students, past members, parents and others say VSO's are a valuable part of classroom instruction in terms of job preparation. However, in most cases no grade-credit is given to students, and few Boards of Education are providing financial support for this part of the program!

It seems logical to suggest, in light of the high values given to VSO's, that credit for this part of the instructional program be given in the grading system and appropriate curriculum materials be provided by the local Board of Education.

The top 5 Policies used by teachers of exemplary VSO's in Ohio are:

(1) Some class/lab time is used for VSO activities.
(2) Teacher time beyond school day is used.
(3) Meeting times are available to all members.
(4) VSO's are important in the teaching process.
(5) VSO's are considered a part of the curriculum.

Attributes of Exemplary Vocational Student Organizations

One of the best of American traditions is that if something is to be done, it should be done right. This, of course, applies to Vocational Student Organizations. Unfortunately, perfection is seldom achieved, but the effort goes on "in search of excellence". In laying the groundwork for a quality Vocational Student Organization, it seems logical to identify those attributes that make for quality, and then work toward those attributes within the organization.

In search of expertise regarding the attributes of quality VSO's, the teacher/advisors of selected exemplary VSO's in Ohio were identified as being the ideal source of this information. They were thus asked to rate in terms of value eleven attributes to the development of excellence in Ohio VSO's. The results are presented in Table 8.

TABLE 8

Attributes of Exemplary Vocational Student Organizations
Shown in Rank Order of the Composite Rating by Responding Teachers
with Ratings Shown by each Service VSO

RANK	ATTRIBUTE	COMPOSITE RATING	AVERAGE RATINGS BY VSO				
			DECA	FFA	FHA/HERO	OOEA	VICA
1	Interested and devoted teacher/advisor.	9.63	8.92	9.93	9.80	9.64	9.81
2	High degree of student participation.	9.02	8.84	9.00	8.86	9.14	9.00
3	Program is relevant to members	9.02	8.23	9.33	9.60	8.57	9.36
4	A high level of pride is evident.	8.88	8.92	9.53	9.20	7.85	8.81
5	School administration is supportive	8.58	7.46	9.00	8.80	8.24	9.45
6	Members enjoy the activities.	8.57	8.53	8.80	8.66	8.07	8.81
7	Goal setting, planning and follow-through is used.	8.52	8.38	8.73	9.13	7.28	9.18
8	A high degree of motivation is generated	8.39	8.30	8.86	8.53	7.64	9.09
9	Teachers are properly prepared for youth work.	8.17	7.46	8.60	8.53	7.07	9.36
10	Parents are interested and supportive.	7.54	7.30	9.13	7.53	6.07	7.54
11	Above average awards and honors are earned.	7.07	6.23	8.20	7.33	6.21	7.27

Parents said it, teachers involved in Part I of this study said it, school superintendents said it, current and former students said it, and now teachers of some of Ohio's most exemplary Vocational Student Organizations are saying it -- The number one attribute of a quality VSO is having an interested and devoted teacher/advisor!

The strength of this conviction is indicated not only by the fact that all 68 responding teachers rated this attribute highest but that the teachers in each of the Service Area VSO's (DECA, FFA, FHA/HERO, OOEA and VICA) also gave this attribute the highest rating for the development of quality programs. Individual teachers often expressed this feeling.

> One teacher remarked: "A vocational student organization is only as good as its teacher. The teacher/advisor needs to lend strong support and give ample encouragement, yet let the members run their own organization so they will experience cooperation, learn to assume responsibility, develop their leadership and learn to serve others."
>
> A VSO president said, "The teacher is the key. If the teacher has nothing to do with the organization, the student won't be active."
>
> A student shared, "What irks me is that....some teachers even run VSO's down!"
>
> One parent said, "Some teachers are dedicated, some not. I'd like to see teachers get more involved and motivated toward student organizations."

In final analysis, few would disagree with the position that the teacher/advisor is the person most accountable for the quality of a Vocational Student Organization. The key, then, is for teachers to be professionally accountable for the student organization part of the program, to take an active interest in it, and work enthusiastically with their students "in search of excellence."

While all of the eleven attributes were rated high, three are especially worthy of recognition. The top three -- having an interested and devoted teacher/advisor, having a high degree of student participation and making the program relevant to the members' interests and needs are of the greatest importance according to the teachers surveyed. Here again, there is strong consistency among the five vocational service VSO's for their top three attributes.

Teachers in four of the five Vocational Service Area VSO's rated the earning of an above average number of awards and honors lowest of all eleven attributes and the other VSO group rated this item second from lowest.

The top 5 Attributes of exemplary VSO's - the "earmarks" of quality are:

(1) An interested and devoted teacher/advisor.
(2) A high degree of student participation.
(3) The program is relevant to members.
(4) A high level of pride is evident.
(5) School administration is supportive.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations based upon personal interaction with 259 lay citizens and 68 exemplary teachers are presented for consideration.

CONCLUSIONS

1. THERE IS STRONG SUPPORT FOR VOCATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS as a part of the job preparation program of Vocational Education, according to ratings made by administrators, employers, former members (employees), parents of VSO members, current students and VSO teacher/advisors.

2. THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSONAL SKILLS, IN TERMS OF JOB PREPARATION AND SUCCESS ARE the ability to carry out compatible relationships in working with others, the possession of exemplary work habits and the possession of effective communication competencies.

3. PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES ARE AS IMPORTANT AS TECHNICAL SKILLS IN TERMS OF SUCCESS ON THE JOB.

4. THERE IS A WIDE VARIATION IN VSO ACTIVITIES USED TO DEVELOP THE NINE PERSONAL SKILLS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY.

5. THE TOP ATTRIBUTES OF QUALITY VSO'S ARE an interested and devoted teacher, a high degree of student participation, a program that is relevant to the members, and a school administration that is supportive.

6. THE TOP POLICIES USED BY TEACHERS OF QUALITY VSO's include classroom and laboratory time used for VSO activities, use of teacher time beyond the school day and meeting times made available for all students and VSO's as a part of the teaching process.

7. MEMBERSHIP IN VSO'S IS NOT A PROGRAM REQUIREMENT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN OHIO.

8. LESS THAN HALF (43.9%) OF OHIO'S STUDENT ENROLLMENT IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ARE members of Vocational Student Organizations.

9. WHILE MOST TEACHERS FEEL THAT A VOCATIONAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION IS an important part of the program, some feel it is an "add-on" rather than a bona fide integral part of the curriculum.

10. THERE IS A CONCERN AMONG TEACHERS ABOUT GIVING THE AMOUNT OF TIME BEYOND REGULAR SCHOOL HOURS THAT IS NECESSARY FOR A QUALITY STUDENT ORGANIZATION. Many teachers consider it "a part of THE job" while others feel their contractual obligation is completed when the regular school day ends.

11. SOME TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION DO NOT INCLUDE INSTRUCTION RELATING SPECIFICALLY TO VSO's AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL. Teachers therefore may not be properly prepared for this part of the Vocational Education program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, based upon the findings of this study, are made for the consideration of the Ohio Board of Education, The Ohio Department of Education, including the Division of Vocational Education, Local Boards of Education, School Administators and other personnel interested in the improvement of Vocational Education.

1. Consider an exploration of emphasis in the State Plan for Vocational Student Organizations as an integral part of Vocational Education.

2. Encourage more emphasis toward incorporating Vocational Student Organization values into the Vocational Education course of study of all instructional programs at the secondary level.

3. Encourage each state Vocational Education Service to direct consideration toward developing a "Plan of Excellence" with teachers which may include: (1) identification of personal skills to be developed, (2) the activities that would develop those skills and (3) ways and means of conducting a quality VSO.

4. Provide a comprehensive program of teacher education, including both pre-service and in-service education, to prepare teachers for effective operation of quality Vocational Student Organizations.

5. Encourage Local Boards of Education to provide funding for instructional materials and other instructionally-related items that are necessary in the operation of quality VSO's.

APPENDIX 1

OHIO BOARD OF EDUCATION

RESOLUTION ENDORSING AND ENCOURAGING YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS
IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

WHEREAS school sponsored Vocational Youth Organizations enhance the instructional program, provide opportunities for the development of leadership abilities, motivate youth for self-improvement, afford opportunities for members to participate in community improvement, and develop a sense of civic responsibility; and

WHEREAS these aspects of human development, combined with the individualized skill attainment available in Vocational Education, provide youth with the essential preparation for entry into their chosen vocation; and

WHEREAS the program of awards and competitive activities for members are designed to complement instructional objectives and to motivate student interest and attainment; and

WHEREAS these activities tend to establish desirable attitudes held in high esteem by potential employers: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the State Board of Education does hereby endorse the following guidelines in relationship to those Vocational Youth Organizations operating in the public schools of Ohio for the purpose of improving and extending services of vocational youth club activities; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Superintendent of Public Instruction be directed, and he hereby is directed, to inform school districts of this Board of Education's endorsement of these guidelines for improving and extending vocational youth club activities:

Vocational Youth Organizations shall be encouraged as an integral part of vocational education instructional programs in public schools for the purpose of complementing and enriching instruction.

Local educational leaders shall be encouraged to evaluate youth organizations at regular intervals to determine the degree of achievement of program objectives.

A close working relationship shall be encouraged with the various vocational youth organizations and with youth and adult organizations outside of the vocational education field.

State staff members in the Division of Vocational Education, State Department of Education, shall be encouraged to serve as state advisors and provide effective leadership on the state level.

Teacher educators shall be encouraged to provide instruction in philosophy, techniques, and operation of vocational youth organizations.

RESOLUTION ENACTED MARCH 13, 1972

APPENDIX 2

POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The United States Department of Education maintains a close relationship with nine vocational student organizations and welcomes their cooperation and support in strengthening programs of vocational education. Recognizing that the past performance and future potential of these nine organizations are compatible with the overall purposes and objectives of education today, the United States Department of Education strongly endorses their objectives and seeks to involve their thinking in the improvement of Vocational Education.

In view of this, these policies represent the position of the United States Department of Education.

1. The United States Department of Education recognizes the educational programs and philosophies embraced by the following vocational student organizations as being an integral part of vocational education instructional programs.

   American Industrial Arts Student Association
   Distributive Education Clubs of America
   Future Business Leaders of America - Phi Beta Lambda
   Future Farmers of America
   Future Homemakers of America
   Health Occupations Students of America
   National Postsecondary Agriculture Student Organization
   Office Education Association
   Vocational Industrial Clubs of America

2. The United States Department of Education recognizes the concept of total student development as being necessary for all vocational education students to assume successful roles in society and to enter the labor market.

3. The United States Department of Education will provide technical and supportive services to assist vocational student organizations and State agencies in their efforts to improve the quality and relevance of instruction, develop student leadership, enhance citizenship responsibilities, overcome sex and race discrimination and stereotyping, and serve students of special populations.

4. The United States Department of Education recognizes the responsibility for vocational instructional programs and related activities, including vocational student organizations, rests with the state and local education agencies.

5. The United States Department of Education approves of Federal and State grant funds for vocational education to be used by the States to give leadership and support to these vocational student organizations and activities directly related to established vocational education instructional programs at all levels under provisions of approved State plans for vocational education.

Effects on the part of State and local education agencies to recognize and encourage the growth and development of these vocational student organizations are highly important and deserve the support of all leaders in American Education.

T.H. Bell
Secretary of Education

Robert M. Worthington
Assistant Secretary for Vocational
and Adult Education

Date: September 28, 1981